

Analyzing the Intrinsic Motivation of the Main Character in the Movie Joy

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Abstract

The film Joy is a motivational movie that inspires viewers to work hard and achieve their dreams. This research examines the intrinsic motivation of the main character based on the Basic Psychological Needs Theory, which suggests that intrinsic motivation is driven by three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study explores how these needs are reflected in the character's actions and dialogue. Using a descriptive-qualitative method, the movie script is analyzed as a primary data source, using document analysis techniques. Data were collected through an observation table and interpreted through content analysis. The findings reveal that the protagonist's intrinsic motivation is primarily fueled by the need for competence, as shown in seven key moments where she strives for mastery. Autonomy is also significant, seen in six instances where the character resists external pressures to assert control over her choices. Relatedness, identified in five moments, provides emotional support that sustains her motivation. These results highlight the importance of competence in driving personal achievement, while autonomy and relatedness offer essential support. The study shows how films like Joy depict psychological needs and suggests that such portrayals can inspire viewers to pursue their own goals by fostering autonomy, competence, and meaningful relationships.

Keywords: Basic Psychological Needs; Intrinsic Motivation; Main Character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, many people face numerous challenges when pursuing their dreams. These obstacles often cause some to abandon their goals, driven by a fear of failure and the desire to avoid repeated disappointments. However, it is essential to recognize that overcoming such challenges not only shapes individuals but also provides valuable life lessons that help them become more resilient and better equipped for future hurdles. One simple yet impactful way to gain insights into these life lessons is by watching meaningful films. Research shows that films, particularly biographical ones, are not only sources of entertainment but also vehicles for powerful narratives that shape behavior and influence personal growth (Tobias, 2020).

Movies are not just sources of entertainment; they are powerful forms of art. According to Corrigan and White (2018), films hold a significant place in contemporary culture and have the potential to evoke emotional responses, convey meaningful messages, and influence viewers' perspectives. Biographical films, in particular, often depict stories of struggle, perseverance, and triumph, making them potent tools for both education and

inspiration. Research on film and education highlights how visual storytelling helps reinforce learning outcomes and emotional engagement (Buckingham, 2020). Among the many films that offer valuable lessons is *Joy*, a 2015 American biographical comedy-drama directed by David O. Russell and starring Jennifer Lawrence. Inspired by the real-life story of Joy Mangano, the film portrays the protagonist's journey of overcoming numerous obstacles to achieve remarkable success as an inventor and entrepreneur. Through her experiences, the film conveys a strong message about motivation, resilience, and pursuing dreams.

Motivation plays an important role in human behavior. According to (Ryan & Deci, 2020), motivation is a force that initiates, sustains, and directs behavior toward achieving specific goals. Motivation is typically divided into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation involves performing actions to attain external rewards, such as money or recognition (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, intrinsic motivation comes from within and is driven by personal interest or enjoyment of the activity itself. Although both forms of motivation are important, intrinsic motivation is often considered more powerful, as it is fueled by an internal desire to engage in activities that provide personal satisfaction and fulfillment (Legault, 2016). Self-determination theory, which includes elements such as autonomy and competence, emphasizes how internal motivation aligns with one's sense of self and personal goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The Basic Psychological Needs Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) highlights three core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that are essential for fostering intrinsic motivation. Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control of one's decisions and actions. Competence is the need to feel effective and capable in one's activities, while relatedness refers to the need to feel connected and valued by others. Individuals are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when these three needs are satisfied. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) state that intrinsic motivation is strengthened when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Furthermore, studies on goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2019) show that intrinsic motivation is enhanced when individuals set goals that align with personal values and are challenging yet attainable.

Several recent studies have explored intrinsic motivation and its influence on behavior. For example, Ayu (2017) conducted a study on the film *42*, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory to explain how the main character's motivation was driven by his progression through different levels of needs. Unlike the current study, which focuses on the equal importance of three psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), Mutiara and Ayu's research followed a hierarchical needs structure of needs. Similarly, Komang et al. (2022) analyzed the psychological aspects of the main character in the movie *Cruella*, using Benhardt's theory, which emphasizes the influence of external factors on motivation. Their study contrasts with the current research, which emphasizes intrinsic factors as the primary drivers of motivation. Studies such as those by Perry (2021) further show how biographical films help individuals identify with protagonists, potentially fostering emotional growth and resilience.

Other relevant studies include Firdaus et al. (2020), who explored the relationship between motivation and achievement in students, finding that intrinsic motivation, supported by autonomy and competence, significantly impacted students' academic performance. Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2019) examined intrinsic motivation in athletes, revealing that autonomy and relatedness played crucial roles in sustaining their motivation to excel in sports. Lastly, Rahayu and Wahyudi (2021) investigated the motivational drivers of entrepreneurs, finding that the need for competence was the dominant factor in fostering entrepreneurial success, echoing the findings in *Joy*. Furthermore, Ortaçtepe Hart and Martel (2020) analyzed the role of motivational films in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes, underscoring how real-life struggles, as portrayed in films, inspire viewers to persevere in their endeavors.

Despite the wealth of literature on intrinsic motivation, this study contributes a unique perspective by focusing on portraying intrinsic motivation in film, specifically through the lens of the Basic Psychological Needs Theory. Unlike previous research, which often emphasizes external motivators or hierarchical needs, this study explores how equal psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—drive the intrinsic motivation of the main character in *Joy*. This research aims to analyze the intrinsic motivation of the protagonist in *Joy* through the framework of Basic Psychological Needs Theory. Specifically, it seeks to uncover how the needs for autonomy,

competence, and relatedness shape the character's resilience and determination to succeed, as reflected in her actions and dialogue throughout the film. The focus on the main character is intentional, as the protagonist often serves as the primary vehicle for conveying motivational themes to the audience (Harinanda & Junaidi, 2020). By examining the intrinsic motivation of the character, this study not only contributes to a deeper understanding of motivation but also highlights the potential of cinematic narratives to inspire personal growth and achievement.

This research addresses a notable gap in the existing literature by exploring how intrinsic motivation is portrayed in films, specifically through the lens of Basic Psychological Needs Theory. While much research has examined motivation in contexts like education, sports, and work, few studies have considered how films—one of the most powerful forms of storytelling—reflect and illustrate intrinsic motivation. By focusing on the film *Joy*, this study offers a fresh perspective on how cinematic narratives can effectively showcase the psychological needs that drive human behavior. The novelty of this research lies in its unique application of the Basic Psychological Needs Theory to film analysis. Although this theory has been widely used in psychology and education, applying it to film character development adds a new dimension to the understanding of motivation. By analyzing the main character in *Joy*, the research highlights how autonomy, competence, and relatedness—core psychological needs—are central to real-life success and fictional journeys. This connection between cinematic storytelling and real-world psychological principles is a fresh approach that enriches both media studies and motivational theory.

Additionally, this study emphasizes the power of films to communicate complex psychological ideas in a way that's accessible and emotionally impactful. While previous research has often focused on external rewards or hierarchical needs, this study shifts the focus to the inner psychological drivers that naturally propel individuals toward their goals. In doing so, it provides a more personal and nuanced view of motivation, highlighting the importance of self-determination, growth, and connection with others. This research also bridges the gap between psychology and media studies, showing how films like *Joy* can influence and inspire audiences by portraying relatable stories of resilience and perseverance. By analyzing how intrinsic motivation is depicted in a film, this study reveals how media can serve as a source of both entertainment and personal inspiration, offering lessons that go beyond the screen.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher adopted a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the intrinsic motivation of the main character qualitatively. According to Creswell and Poth (2017) and Nasir et al. (2019), qualitative research involves the researcher deeply engaging with information from sources or participants to describe and interpret words and meanings. This approach is inherently subjective, meaning that the analysis and interpretation of the data are influenced by the researcher's own perspective and understanding. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted, qualitative research often emphasizes an interpretative approach, where the researcher's insights and reflections contribute to understanding the phenomenon being studied.

This study's data sources included the film *Joy* and its corresponding script. Prior to conducting the analysis, the researcher watched the movie multiple times and carefully reviewed the script. To collect the necessary data, the researcher employed a document analysis technique. Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating both physical and electronic documents. In this study, data collection involved identifying and selecting utterances from the main character that aligned with the indicators of basic psychological needs. These selected utterances were then recorded in an observation table, which served as the primary tool for data collection. Table 1 below outlines the indicators of basic psychological needs used to identify autonomy, competence, and relatedness as reflected in the main character's dialogue.

Table 1. Indicators of Basic Psychological Needs

No	Basic Psychological Needs	Indicators
1	Autonomy	Making one's own choices

No	Basic Psychological Needs	Indicators
2	Competence	Showing a desire for control Expressing a desire to use or improve one's abilities Showing the determination to excel in one's pursuits Taking on challenges in one's pursuits
3	Relatedness	Expressing the satisfaction in one's accomplishments Showing a desire for positive relationships or social connections. Feeling a sense of connection, attachment, or significant to others. Expressing the satisfaction derived from one's relationships or connections with others.

Following data collection, the researcher utilized a content analysis technique to interpret the intrinsic motivation of the main character. Krippendorff (2018) defines content analysis as a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful content) in relation to the context in which they are presented. As explained by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Schreier (2012), content analysis is a flexible tool in qualitative research, allowing researchers to systematically code and categorize data while remaining open to patterns that emerge inductively. This method provided a structured approach to analyzing the character's intrinsic motivation throughout the film. The data collection process and analysis are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below, followed by an explanation of each figure.

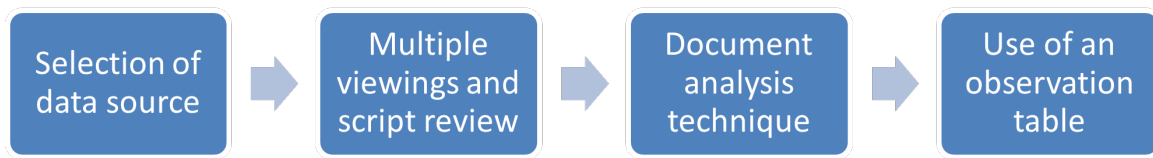


Figure 1. Data Collection process

The data collection process began with the selection of appropriate data sources, specifically the film Joy and its accompanying script. To gain a thorough understanding of the main character's intrinsic motivations, the researcher conducted multiple viewings of the film and carefully reviewed the script. This allowed for a deeper exploration of the character's journey and psychological state. Using a systematic document analysis technique, the researcher then extracted relevant data, such as key utterances and actions that reflected the character's psychological needs. These extracted pieces of data were subsequently organized into an observation table, categorizing specific scenes or dialogue according to the three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This structured approach ensured that the data was organized and ready for further analysis.



Figure 2. Data Analysis process

The data analysis process began with the researcher using content analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the main character's intrinsic motivation. Through this technique, the researcher systematically examined the collected data to detect expressions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Specific indicators from the Basic Psychological Needs Theory were then applied to the data, helping to assess how these psychological

needs were portrayed in the character's actions and dialogue. Once these indicators were applied, the researcher interpreted the findings by determining how each need—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—was reflected in the character's behavior and motivations throughout the film. The results were cross-referenced with the Basic Psychological Needs Theory to ensure accuracy, confirming that the character's behavior aligned with established theoretical principles. Finally, the researcher synthesized these findings to conclude how the three core psychological needs influenced the character's intrinsic motivation, providing a deeper understanding of her drive to overcome challenges and achieve her goals.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher determined that the main character's intrinsic motivation was indeed shaped by basic psychological needs, as evidenced through the character's utterances. The findings are detailed as follows:

3.1. Findings

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to engage in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, driven by personal interest or enjoyment (Legault, 2016; Santrock, 2020). According to the Basic Psychological Needs Theory applied in this study, intrinsic motivation is fueled by three fundamental psychological needs:

A. Autonomy

The first essential psychological need that significantly influences intrinsic motivation is the need for autonomy. As described by Ryan and Deci (2017), autonomy refers to the need for individuals to control their own experiences and actions. It encompasses the desire to make personal decisions and direct one's own behavior. Autonomy is closely linked with the experience of volition, or the freedom to make independent choices, and a sense of willingness (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). When individuals act with autonomy, they are fully engaged in their activities; conversely, acting against it can lead to feelings of confusion and internal conflict (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

This research revealed that the main character's intrinsic motivation was strongly influenced by the need for autonomy. Through careful analysis using specific autonomy indicators, the researcher identified six instances where this need was clearly expressed in the character's dialogue. The dialogues are presented below.

Utterances (timecode: 00:03:53 – 00:04:43)

- “And then I started to build my very own house, where I would live and make wonderful creations for all the world to see and have. And maybe for the prince and princess who lived across the forest in the castle.”
- “No, I don't need a prince. This is a special power. I don't need a prince.”

These dialogues exemplify young Joy's sense of autonomy as she takes control of her own life story, aligning with the Basic Psychological Needs Theory by demonstrating self-directedness, internal motivation, and resistance to societal pressures. Through her words, Joy embodies the essence of autonomy: making choices based on personal values and goals, rather than external demands. They reflect young Joy's clear sense of autonomy, as she imagines building her own house and making her own creations without needing external validation, such as a prince. Her declaration of not needing a prince represents her strong independence and self-reliance, asserting her control over her life.

The dialogue from young Joy, “And then I started to build my very own house, where I would live and make wonderful creations for all the world to see and have. . . No, I don't need a prince. This is a special power. I don't need a prince,” offers a clear illustration of her autonomy, which aligns with the Basic Psychological Needs Theory. According to this theory, autonomy is the need to experience volition and self-regulation over one's actions and decisions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In this instance, young Joy is not only imagining a future in which she is

independent and productive, but she is also rejecting the societal expectation of needing external validation, such as a prince, to achieve fulfillment.

Joy's rejection of the idea of a prince reflects her intrinsic motivation to forge her own path and define success on her own terms. This is closely aligned with the concept of autonomy, which emphasizes an individual's desire to make their own choices without coercion or dependence on external factors. By asserting, "I don't need a prince," Joy demonstrates her self-reliance and commitment to personal agency, emphasizing that her sense of purpose and success comes from within, not from societal norms or external validation.

This moment can also be connected to the notion of psychological empowerment, where autonomy is not just about making decisions but feeling capable and in control of one's life direction. By envisioning herself as the creator of her own life—building her own house and making her own creations—Joy expresses a strong sense of ownership over her future. The significance of autonomy here is in rejecting dependence and actively constructing her life narrative, which aligns with the broader understanding of autonomy as essential for intrinsic motivation and personal fulfillment.

B. Competence

The second key psychological need that plays a significant role in intrinsic motivation is the need for competence, which refers to the desire to feel effective and capable (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This need is rooted in the notion that individuals seek to engage in activities where they can demonstrate their abilities and achieve mastery. As Cerasoli et al. (2016) highlighted, competence involves a drive to showcase or enhance one's skills. The need for competence motivates individuals to perform effectively in various aspects of their lives or in critical situations (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In this study, the findings indicated that the main character's intrinsic motivation was significantly driven by the need for competence. By applying specific indicators of competence, the researcher identified seven instances where this need was clearly articulated in the character's dialogue. These findings are further presented below.

Utterances (timecodes: 00:39:45 – 00:42:37)

- "I accept your terms" (competence: taking on a challenge)
- "I pick up the gun!" (Competence: showing her determination to excel in her business)

The context of this utterances happens when Joy is seeking an investment from Trudy to launch her mop business. Trudy subjects Joy to a series of questions to determine her financial worthiness, questioning her past achievements and business experience. This scene highlights Joy's readiness to face the financial risks and challenges associated with starting a business. By accepting Trudy's strict terms and metaphorically "picking up the gun," Joy demonstrates her determination and willingness to take control of her fate in the business world. Her bold statements reflect her inner drive to excel and her confidence in her abilities, even when confronted with skepticism and doubt. This aligns with the concept of competence in the Basic Psychological Needs Theory, where individuals are motivated by the desire to demonstrate and improve their skills in the face of challenges.

Utterances (timecode: 00:57:47 – 01:00:10)

- "Please, give me a chance" (competence: showing her determination to excel in selling her mops)

The context of this dialogue is when Neil, a television executive at QVC, is skeptical about Joy's mop. Despite Neil's critical remarks about her product, Joy insists on the mop's superiority based on her own experience as a homemaker. In this dialogue, Joy showcases her belief in her own product, despite having no formal business experience. Her plea for a chance demonstrates her strong desire to succeed and willingness to prove herself in the competitive marketplace. This situation represents her confidence in her product's value, driven by her competence in understanding household needs, a key motivator for her persistence. According to the Basic Psychological Needs Theory, this persistence is driven by her need to feel capable and effective in her pursuits.

Utterances (timecode: 09:00:012 – 01:01:12)

- "Yeah, I think so" (Competence: taking on a challenge)

This utterance happens when Joy explains the unique feature of her mop to Neil, emphasizing its design and practicality. When asked if she can produce 50.000 units, she confidently agrees. This response shows her confidence in the ability to meet demanding expectations. Although she is new to the manufacturing world, she does not shy away from the task, reflecting her belief in her capabilities. In line with the Basic Psychological Needs Theory, this moment illustrates how Joy's motivation is fueled by her need to feel competent and rise to the challenges she faces in her business.

Utterances (timecode: 01:11:16 – 01:12:27)

- "Neil, you gotta give us another chance!" (Competence: Showing her determination to excel in her business)

The utterance happens after a setback in sales, Joy tries to persuade Neil to give her another chance to showcase her product on QVC. Despite facing a significant setback—unsuccessful sales and mounting debt—Joy does not give up. Her determination to secure another opportunity demonstrates her perseverance and belief in her ability to succeed. This scene highlights Joy's resilience in the face of failure, a key trait of competence. The Basic Psychological Needs Theory posits that individuals who feel capable are more likely to persist in the face of obstacles, as Joy does here.

Utterances (Timecode: 01:18:56 – 01:20:49)

- "Oh, my God! 29,000! This is very special!" (Competence: Expressing the satisfaction in her accomplishments)
- "Oh my God! These numbers keep climbing! Thank you." (Competence: Expressing the satisfaction in her accomplishments)

These utterances happen when Joy is demonstrating her mop on live television. As sales soar, she expresses her amazement at the positive reception of her product. In pivotal scene, Joy experiences the fruits of her hard work. Her joy and surprise at the soaring sales reflect her deep satisfaction with her accomplishments. This moment highlights the fulfillment of her competence need—she not only demonstrates her effectiveness but also receives validation for her efforts, which further reinforces her intrinsic motivation. The Basic Psychological Needs Theory emphasizes that the satisfaction of competence is essential for continued motivation and engagement in one's pursuits.

C. Relatedness

The third fundamental psychological need that plays a vital role in intrinsic motivation is the need for relatedness, which involves feeling a sense of belonging and connection with others (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Relatedness reflects the desire to form meaningful relationships and establish connections with those around us. According to (Ryan & Deci, 2017), this need can be fulfilled when individuals feel valued by others or when they themselves care for others. Relatedness is most strongly felt when an individual receives support from others; however, offering support and seeking significance in relationships is equally essential for fulfilling this need (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The need for relatedness is satisfied when others show concern and care toward an individual, as well as when the individual has opportunities to express compassion and care for others, thereby strengthening their connections and relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In this study, the researcher discovered that the main character's intrinsic motivation was significantly influenced by the need for relatedness. By utilizing specific indicators of relatedness, the researcher identified five instances in the character's dialogue where this need was prominently expressed. These findings are further detailed below.

Utterances (Timecode: 00:33:50 – 00:34:51)

- “Tomorrow, I would like to have a meeting with you and Trudy at your office to discuss her investing in the manufacturing of my new idea.” (Relatedness: Showing her desire for a relationship with Trudy)

Here, Joy speaks to Rudy and Tony, asking them to move out of her house. Additionally, she informs Rudy about a meeting she wants to have with him and Trudy to discuss her new business idea. In this scene, Joy is attempting to assert her independence, yet she also expresses a desire for collaboration and support from Trudy. This shows her balancing autonomy and relatedness—while she’s working to establish boundaries with those living in her house, she recognizes the importance of maintaining a connection with Trudy for the future of her business. The need for relatedness is evident in her willingness to involve others in her venture, signaling her recognition of the value of relationships in achieving success.

Utterances (Timecode: 01:17:43 – 01:18:56)

- “That is actually exactly how I was inspired to invent this mop.” (Relatedness: Feeling a sense of connection to Jackie)
- “Thank you.” (Relatedness: Expressing her satisfaction derived from her relationships with Jackie)

These utterances happen during a live segment, Jackie (Joy’s friend) calls in pretending to be a customer. This moment helps Joy gain confidence in presenting her mop on television. In this moment, Joy recognizes Jackie’s voice and immediately becomes more confident in her presentation. This scene demonstrates how social connections, such as her friendship with Jackie, provide Joy with emotional support during a stressful situation. Jackie’s call allows Joy to feel understood and supported, which fulfills her need for relatedness. By sharing the personal story behind her invention, Joy also fosters a sense of connection with her audience, further emphasizing the importance of relatedness in her success.

Utterances (Timecode: 01:21:19 – 01:21:50)

- “Friends in commerce. I agree. Let’s shake on it!” (Relatedness: Showing her desire for a relationship with Neil)

After the success of her mop on QVC, Joy celebrates with Neil, her business partner, and they discuss their relationship as “friends in commerce.” Joy’s handshake with Neil symbolizes the establishment of a mutually beneficial professional relationship built on trust and collaboration. By acknowledging themselves as “friends in commerce,” both characters acknowledge the importance of maintaining a healthy working relationship despite potential future conflicts. This scene highlights Joy’s recognition of the value of cooperation and camaraderie in business, which satisfies her need for relatedness. Through this relationship, Joy gains a sense of security and belonging in the business world, reinforcing her motivation to succeed.

Utterances (Timecode: 01:52:43 – 01:53:27)

- “I know what it feels like. I know what it feels like to be in that chair.” (Relatedness: Feeling a sense of connection to the Memphis woman)

In this context, Joy meets a Memphis woman who has created her own invention. Joy connects with her on a personal level, offering support and guidance to help the woman develop her product. Joy’s empathetic response to the Memphis woman reflects her understanding of the challenges faced by inventors. This moment highlights Joy’s ability to connect with others on a deep emotional level, especially when they share similar experiences. By offering support and helping the woman take the next steps in her journey, Joy fulfills her need for relatedness, as she feels a sense of connection and significance in helping others. This scene underscores the importance of meaningful relationships in Joy’s personal and professional growth, as well as her desire to foster a supportive community of creators.

3.2. Discussion

The research findings provide compelling evidence that the main character's intrinsic motivation in the film *Joy* is significantly shaped by the three fundamental psychological needs outlined in the Basic Psychological Needs Theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs are central to driving the character's behavior and motivation, as revealed through her dialogue and actions throughout the film. By examining the impact of these needs on Joy's intrinsic motivation, the study offers valuable insights into how psychological principles manifest in cinematic storytelling.

Autonomy, or the desire to control one's own life and decisions, emerges as a significant factor in shaping Joy's intrinsic motivation. Identified six times in the analysis, autonomy is evident in Joy's consistent assertion of control over her circumstances, whether it's rejecting societal expectations or taking ownership of her business decisions. These findings align with Ryan and Deci's (2017) theory that autonomy is a critical component of intrinsic motivation, enabling individuals to engage in activities aligned with their values and personal goals. Joy's ability to resist external pressures and make independent decisions, even in the face of adversity, underscores the importance of autonomy in fostering resilience. This resonates with Firdaus et al. (2020), who found that autonomy significantly impacts motivation and achievement in students, supporting the idea that when individuals have control over their own decisions, their drive to succeed is heightened.

Competence, the need to feel effective and capable, plays an even more dominant role in driving Joy's intrinsic motivation, appearing seven times throughout the analysis. Joy's relentless pursuit of becoming a successful inventor and entrepreneur is a clear manifestation of this need, as she continually seeks to prove her abilities and overcome challenges. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), competence motivates individuals to engage in difficult tasks that provide opportunities for growth and achievement. This is consistent with the findings of Rahayu and Wahyudi (2021), who emphasized the role of competence in entrepreneurial success, showing that individuals who feel capable are more likely to overcome challenges and excel in their pursuits. Joy's persistence and determination, even in the face of skepticism and setbacks, illustrate the crucial role competence plays in fostering intrinsic motivation.

The need for relatedness, or the desire to feel connected and valued by others, also plays a significant role in shaping Joy's intrinsic motivation. This need was identified five times in the analysis, highlighting Joy's strong desire to build and maintain meaningful relationships. Whether it's her friendship with Jackie, her professional relationship with Neil, or her connection with the Memphis woman, Joy's interactions with others provide her with emotional support and a sense of belonging, which sustain her motivation. This aligns with Rahmawati et al. (2019), who found that relatedness plays a crucial role in sustaining motivation in athletes, demonstrating how feeling connected and supported by others enhances one's drive to succeed. Joy's journey illustrates how social connections not only provide her with the strength to continue but also enhance her motivation to achieve her goals.

This research adds to the existing literature on intrinsic motivation by providing a unique perspective on how these psychological needs are portrayed in film. While Ayu (2017) study on *42* used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which follows a sequential model of fulfilling needs, this study emphasizes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are equally important and do not require a hierarchical progression. Additionally, Komang et al. (2022) focused on external motivators in the film *Cruella*, while this study highlights intrinsic factors—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as the natural psychological needs that drive motivation from within. These contrasts emphasize the novelty of this research, as it demonstrates that the character in *Joy* is primarily motivated by internal psychological needs rather than external influences, offering new insights into the role of intrinsic motivation in cinematic narratives.

While this research offers meaningful insights into the main character's intrinsic motivation, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. The study focuses primarily on verbal expressions, potentially overlooking non-verbal cues or other narrative elements that may also significantly influence the character's motivation. Additionally, by concentrating solely on the main character, the analysis may have excluded other

influential factors within the broader context of the film. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a more comprehensive analysis that includes non-verbal communication and explores additional variables that may shape a character's motivation within a narrative.

This study makes a valuable contribution to an understanding of intrinsic motivation through the framework of Basic Psychological Needs Theory. The findings reinforce the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in shaping motivation, while also highlighting how films can effectively illustrate complex psychological principles. By applying these theoretical concepts to the character development in Joy, the research offers new insights into how intrinsic motivation can be depicted in cinematic narratives, providing inspiration and lessons for audiences. This study not only supports previous research on intrinsic motivation but also extends its application to the analysis of popular media, offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of psychology and storytelling.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the main character in the film Joy is strongly driven by intrinsic motivation, primarily shaped by the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence emerged as the most influential factor, pushing the character to excel and achieve her goals, while autonomy and relatedness played crucial roles in providing her with control over her decisions and emotional support through meaningful relationships. These results highlight the equal importance of these psychological needs in fostering intrinsic motivation, offering a fresh perspective on how fictional narratives can reflect real-world psychological principles. The study's findings contribute to a broader understanding of how intrinsic motivation can be cultivated by satisfying these core psychological needs, both in fictional characters and in real-life contexts.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the analysis beyond verbal expressions to include non-verbal cues, visual storytelling elements, and other narrative techniques that may also influence a character's motivation. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how intrinsic motivation is portrayed in films. Additionally, exploring how different genres or cultural contexts impact the portrayal of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in cinematic characters could yield valuable insights. Such studies could deepen the exploration of how media and storytelling continue to inspire intrinsic motivation in audiences.

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